



From painting by Feuerstein

The Christmas Child

"Peace on earth, goodwill to men,"
 Oh, how glad the strain!
 Christ is born in Bethlehem,
 Love begins its reign,

PATTY'S "PEACE AND GOODWILL" CHRISTMAS

BY DAISY D. STEPHENSON

"**T**HEN it's all settled." Patty Paige surveyed the group of friends about her with satisfaction and approval. "I'll telephone Mrs. Pierce that she can count on the Poppy Girl Scouts to provide and serve Christmas dinner at the Neighborhood House. That means for mothers and little tots, too."

She poised a tiny pencil over an absurd little memorandum book, inquiring, "How many of you prefer helping at noon? You know many of the mothers are working all day as chambermaids or waitresses, and can't come till evening. So it is really a double dinner we're managing, girls."

Ruth Allison responded quickly. Patty's eyes had rested on her naturally for every Poppy expected vivacious Ruth to be first in war, peace or anything that happened. Decidedly she said, "I'll do my tray-dropping at noon. The reason is big and husky brother Bob. He won't get home from the University till afternoon,—some date of international importance the evening before, it seems."

"Put me down for evening service, Pats," Nella Wylie replied to the query in her leader's eye. Then one by one, the girls answered the informal roll call, and Patty whipped the business-like memorandum into her pocket with a little flourish.

As briskly as if she was catching trout right off the reel, she brought up the next bit of business. "Carol, your mother is such a model of household efficiency, famous for her newspaper articles on economy and all,—can't you coax her to squander a dime's worth of her valuable time and advice on us? We want this dinner perfectly simple—"

"But simply perfect!" interrupted roguish Anita, as Patty hesitated, endeavoring to choose the nicest phrase, descriptive of the good, wholesome meal she planned for these poor, worthy women of the west end district. "No paper frills to slip off and splash in the gravy. Do have oodles of gravy, girls! And leave soup off the menu for pity's sake! These women would hate wasting time on it. I've heard our laundress express herself on the soup subject. They can always revel in soup and left-overs at home. And start them right off with

a hurrah on turkey. Don't keep them in suspense for fear it's only pot roast in disguise." Anita clasped her hands imploringly, and a chorus of giggles rewarded her impassioned plea.

Seizing her opportunity then, Carol assured Patty that her mother had already put her services at their disposal. After a brief discussion of decorations and arrangements, the Poppies adjourned, all making motions at once.

"Anybody going down town?" called Patty from the door. Her little roadster was considered common property, every Poppy feeling free to commandeer the car on occasion, for Patty was the very flower of generosity, always sharing the favors showered on her by fortune and a doting father.

Now any sensible adult would have declared there was room for two only, but as Patty reminded the girls, "You've never been too proud or too fat to scrouge in. Though if Anita doesn't stop eating sweets and start playing tennis—"

Just for that Anita hopped in and appropriated three-fourths of the seat, ordering, "Lewis's Department Store, James!" It developed that only two others were going shopping, so there was oceans of room and nobody felt at all sat upon. Driving down, they naturally chattered of personal plans for the holidays. Patty heard them with a little wistful expression, remarking, "Well, your parties and company dinners and matinees are all very fine, but I long for something different, the variety of Christmas that is as old fashioned as hoop skirts and minuets. If some kind old witch popped up this minute on the running board, I'd ask for the kind of festival my grandmother in New England used to make."

After she had deposited her merry load according to orders, she drove slowly through the busy traffic toward the great office building where her father spent most of his time practicing law. At the intersection of the busiest street the Big Idea flashed into Patty's mind, so dazzling her that she neither saw nor heard the signal that warned her to stop. As a consequence she was halted and lectured by the fat traffic policeman, and sneered at by the irate Irish woman who had just escaped total annihilation.

A moment later, Patty was being told by the freckled guardian of her father's privacy, "He's busy." Patty did not resent this old story, but grinned back cheerfully with a careless, "Oh, I'll just go on in and wait," and boldly entered the busy man's sanctum. Accustomed to this high-handed proceeding, her father continued his dictation. When the capable secretary retired, Patty fell upon her father with a whirlwind of hugs and a torrent of chatter.

After the first start of astonishment, Mr. Paige patted her approvingly as she set forth, "It's exactly the sort of a holiday we've been hungry for, daddy, ever since we lost grandmother. Now aren't you glad you haven't leased the cute lit-

THE CHRISTMAS CHILD

BY CARO A. DUGAN

ONCE in distant Bethlehem,
(It was winter wild),
In a manger sweet with hay
Lay the Christmas child.

High above, there shone a star,
Large and gleaming bright;
Wise men travelled from afar
Guided by its light.

And, with simple shepherds, stood
By the manger bed,
Gazing, in adoring awe,
On that little head.

Mary Mother smiled at them,
Sweet her face with love,
And afar, they hear a song
Floating from above.

"Peace on earth, goodwill to men";
Oh, how glad the strain!
Christ is born in Bethlehem,
Love begins its reign.

tle ranch? Of course," she admitted, "it won't be the dear old homestead in New Hampshire, but it's the best substitute we can manage here. Aunt Sara is the ideal cook, and Uncle Seth will dote on getting things ready."

Mr. Paige agreed with enthusiasm, just as Patty had fondly expected him to. Indeed, he had frequently admitted that Patty could out-argue him easily, "However, rather than confess defeat, we compromise," he had added drolly. "I stick to my opinion, and Patty has her way." This time their opinions seemed in close harmony and from then on Patty's erratic actions bewildered the staid old housekeeper. One day Patty carried her father bodily away from his briefs, abstracts, articles of incorporation and such legal "fumadiddles," for a flight into the country. "Your poor brain needs a rest, and so do your clients," she soothed him. Feeling helplessly kidnapped, Mr. Paige still threatened, in the midst of enjoying himself thoroughly, "I'll get out an injunction to restrain you, Patricia Lee Paige!"

Patty made a saucy face, and dimpled demurely. "Truly, dad, I won't molest you again if you'll write just one letter and sign one more check."

"Blackmail," groaned her father dismally. "Well, out with it. There's an important conference in half an hour—" frowning dubiously at his watch.

"I'll get you there," Patty assured him consolingly, as from the ranch porch they viewed the mighty range of the Rockies. "I'll talk fast, dad. You're absolutely the dearest daddy in America. Probably in both hemispheres, though having had but one father in my life, I mustn't incriminate myself too deeply. Never mind the check," she waved it aside lightly. "Money's no object just now." Her vivid

face was swiftly serious, and her gray eyes appealed to him as she begged softly, "Daddy, won't you please write Uncle Dave today?"

The change in her father's kindly face was instantaneous. His eyes were cold and steely. "I requested you not to reopen that subject, Patty," he reminded curtly. "Once before you persuaded me to send checks which have never been acknowledged; Dave has gone his way, I'll go mine."

"Oh, but daddy!" Patty's hurt tone would have halted the Juggernaut. "They've been in such trouble. Uncle Dave has been almost an invalid, Aunt Mary writes me, ever since Bert fell in Flanders. They are having to give up the old Iowa farm because they are too old and frail to run it without lots of help. Though she didn't come right out and say so, I know they are hard pressed for the simple necessities." As her father did not speak, but gazed stonily ahead, Patty cuddled her head against his shoulder.

"He's your own, only brother, daddy, just as Jack is mine. Do you suppose I'd ever refuse to forgive Jack, no matter how crawly-caterpillarish he treated me?" She threw back her head proudly as she exclaimed, "Can you think of anything my brother could do that my love wouldn't overlook?"

Her father sighed, and surrendered reluctantly. "It's Christmas time, daddy," wise Patty pursued her advantage. "Peace and good-will time, when old scores should be forgotten. What if your brother was unreasonable and selfish? Let's have no foes in our family."

Her father kissed her silently, and when Patty dropped him at the office, she had his promise, given and accepted very solemnly, indeed. When Patty reached home, Aunt Sara was singing revival songs and baking pies in her own inimitable way. "There is a happy land, far, far away," sang Aunt Sara, changing keys impartially several times while she figured just how many pies would be needed for Christmas dinner, and what variety of cake would be most appropriate, and whether old-fashioned dressing would be better than an oyster one.

Patty skipped onto the scene of preparation, promptly deciding on Jack's favorite chocolate layer cake, and the oldest-fashioned dressing possible, thereby relieving Aunt Sara of further mental strain, and leaving her free to measure, stir, and resume her singing, the latter recreation taking the tune of her favorite, "Let a little sunshine in."

"You and Uncle Seth will go out on the interurban early Christmas morning," shouted Patty, returning to penetrate the sunshine in the soul of Aunt Sara. "I arranged for an old man to meet you and convey the goodies to the ranch. Have a huge fire in the living room, Aunt Sara. There's heaps of pine knots, and we're going to have the jolliest sort of heart-and-hearth-warming day"

Aunt Sara beamed all over her pleasant, wrinkled face. "Brother Abner wrote he'd be free to come whenever you send for him, honey, and if I do say it about my own blood and kin, he's the sensiblest fruit rancher in the state. So if Jack only gets down from the mine, and your folks arrive on time, we'll all be singing carols Christmas day."

Christmas morning was a real triumph of Colorado weather, gold sunshine, blue mountain range, capped with winter's royal ermine. Patty scorned to sleep late on such a glorious occasion. She was downstairs before the coffee percolator started bubbling.

"Daddy's pet waffles, Aunt Sara, and some of that Indiana maple syrup. Please make enough waffles for two of me, for being happy seems to make me hungrier!"

"Oh, there's glory in my soul today!" sang Aunt Mary, mixing and beating energetically.

After breakfast, Patty made innumerable trips to the 'phone to remind the Poppy girls of certain things, and was, in turn, reminded, till she wondered whether she would ever have an opportunity to be clothed and in her right mind. At last, with a shower of "Don't forgets" she drove away to the Neighborhood House, leaving her father contentedly perusing the paper.

As usual, good fortune attended her plans, for the trains were on time and by mid-afternoon Patty had her family together, and sped them to the fruit ranch, twenty miles from the city. "It's a dear, homey place," decided Aunt Mary after a tour of inspection with her excited niece. "To think of breathing this wonderful air and living with such scenery while you make your living—" Aunt Mary paused eloquently and drew Patty into her motherly arms.

Jack and his chum, Billy, were small boys again; darting into the pantry to confiscate cookies before taking a hike over the foot-hills, plotting to overtake some unwary rabbit. Uncle Dave, gaunt and stoical, sat in the easy chair and viewed the majesty of the eternal hills. Very grateful he felt, realizing meekly the generosity of his younger brother in this hour of need.

"I've been downright mulish," he confessed in all humility when he found himself alone with his brother. "I was to blame all along, but the Lord has given me another chance. It doesn't pay to feel bitter toward your brother or your neighbor. I envied you because you were successful and I was a failure. Your boy came back to you, mine never will—" His stern face worked piteously as Patty's big-hearted father put his arm about the bowed shoulders, just as if they were boys together again. They were gripping hands silently when Patty fitted in, relieving the tension with her happy laughter.

"I do hope talking has given you a monstrous appetite, for Aunt Sara will be

mortally offended if you don't eat a second helping of everything from grapefruit on down," she said lightly.

"I'm ready to carve this minute," declared her father. "Start Sara on a faster tune, Patty." From the kitchen the cook was reflecting leisurely on the "loved scenes that her infancy knew," evidently affected by her rustic surroundings.

"Here are the boys now," exulted Patty, "and thank goodness the bunnies escaped!"

"Dinner's ready!" announced the cook cheerfully, and all took their places with a reverent pause while Uncle Dave asked a memorable blessing. Too deep for expression was the relief on the faces of Uncle Dave and Aunt Mary when the host explained Patty's wonderful scheme.

"Dave, you and Mary are to make your home right here, with Sara's brother Abner to manage the hard work for you." Mr. Paige for once, was beyond his depth, "You go on, Patty,"

"It's a whole flock of favors to me," declared Patty, "for I'll be running out with my friends to feast on crullers and frys. So we're not entirely unselfish." There followed an eloquent silence which nobody tried to bridge. Then Sara lightened the situation by bursting into song, and the sentiment found an echo in everybody gathered about that happy Christmas table. "Oh, there's sunshine, blessed sunshine, There is sunshine in my soul—"



THE BEST THING

BY EDWARD T. MARTIN

"MOTHER, did you ever see a boy of seventeen stronger or better able to work than I?"

John Mason asked of his mother, a widow living in a village on the rock-bound coast of Maine.

"No, John," she answered. "I know of none more strong, more ready or more willing, but why ask such a question?"

"Well, Mother," the boy continued, "after I graduate from High School next week—what? There is no way you can afford to send me to College and I really cannot afford to go. Brothers Ed and Will both must be educated and if I go out into the world and work, it means a better education for them, an easier time for you. Ed is brighter and learns more quickly than I. As for Will, why he's the baby, neither strong nor healthy and must be favored. So it's up to me to do something."

"What is my great big man of a son thinking about doing?" Mrs. Mason asked proudly.

"Lots of things, Mother, dear. Lots of things," he answered lightly. Then more soberly, "If I could only get West to California, or to Alaska I might find a gold

mine, and our days of trouble would be over."

"It might be only the commencement of them," his mother replied, shaking her head. "You know 'A little and contentment is better than great riches and a troubled mind.'"

"Y-e-s," her son answered doubtfully, "but—but—let us look at it the other way. Isn't great riches and contentment better than nothing and a troubled mind?"

"Perhaps. Who can tell?" Mrs. Mason replied.

That night she wrote a long letter to her brother in Seattle asking if he could do anything in a business way for her son. The day after John graduated she received in answer a telegram saying: "Can give the boy work as time-keeper and clerk. Salmon cannery in Alaska. Money for traveling expenses by mail."

And that is how young John Mason found himself one day late in the spring aboard the Steamer Admiral Noyes watching the Olympic Mountains become slowly obscured by a blue haze and finally vanish from sight in the distance.

It was a rough, quarrelsome crowd on board the steamship. Men from all nations. People of a kind the young New England boy had never been thrown among before. Homesick, seasick, with neither friend nor acquaintance that first seven days on the Admiral Noyes seemed more like a month than a week. On the eighth day the boat ran along the sheltered side of an ice floe, which broke the waves and checked its rolling. John, as the water became smoother, rapidly recovered from his seasickness and in a short time got to know "the only decent fellow on board," a Seattle boy of 19, George Ames by name, who was making the trip in expectancy of finding work as tally clerk in one of the canneries.

One cold morning John was seated in the cuddy hole called by courtesy "Social Hall" and reading through for the sixth time a two-weeks-old newspaper, when George came down the companionway and dropped on a seat beside him. Then after a moment of silence asked in a tone so low none of the other loungers could hear, "Say, kid, can you swim?"

"Swim? Amongst this floating ice? What a queer question," John replied. "Why do you want to know?"

"For no particular reason," the Seattle boy answered, "only—now don't be frightened—this old hooker has started a plate or something and is taking water aboard about as fast as the steam pump can throw it out and one good bump against the ice will send her to the bottom with Captain, crew, salmon packers, fishermen—and what seems of more importance—us, along to keep her company. At breakfast I heard the Captain and Engineer talking. The old Engineer who seems half decent said, 'Why don't you beach her so as to save the crew and passengers?'"

"What did the Captain say?" asked

John when he had recovered from his surprise.

"Well," George answered, "he sort of puckered up his nose and asked, 'if the leak gets no worse, how long do you suppose it would be until the water reached your fires?' 'Oh, I don't know,' the Engineer told him, 'two or three days maybe. Anyway you'd better fix up a boat so we can make a quick get away. There'll be no controlling that crazy mob in the steerage if they suspect there's danger.' They left the table together and I saw them talking with Sandy the kid helper in the engine room and he went right away and put a lot of stuff in the No. 3 life boat."

"What shall we do? Looks bad, does it not?" Mason asked.

"I'll go talk with Jim, a waiter I know. You stay here."

In a hour he returned walking slowly, head down and evidently thinking hard. "The question is," he began, "shall we save ourselves at the expense of everybody else except those in the Captain's life boat, or shall we not? Jim owns that little dory lashed to the stanchions on the port side of the upper deck. Like all dories she's a good sea boat. It's only twenty miles to the Inside Passage where the water's always smooth, and we can make a safe get-away in her. Jim has an idea the Captain may not be so very anxious to bring this old tub into port. Big insurance and all that. May have left a valve open purposely."

"Nice condition of things, isn't it?" John answered. "What's best to do?"

"Don't know," George replied. "Probably sneak some grub aboard the dory. Take a couple of good fellows and get away when the Captain does."

"That may be right if you think so," Mason said quietly, "only when you pick your couple of good fellows, leave me out. I won't go, at least until I'm sure nothing can be done to save the rest of the crowd."

"Shucks!" exclaimed George excitedly. "I'm just as game as any boy, big or little, that ever lived in New England. I'll stay if you do."

"Good boy. Shake," John answered, extending his hand, which Ames took reluctantly, saying at the same time, "Better hide some life preservers where we can find them handily when the rush comes and put on an extra suit of heavy underwear."

About nine that night the cry went out, "Man the hand pumps. Ship's sprung a leak and the steam pump can't keep her free." At midnight, still light, so close were they to the Arctic Circle, a long break was seen in the ice, a channel of blue water leading straight in shore. The leak had been gaining rapidly and the water reached within a foot of the grate bars, when the Captain called down the speaking tube to the engineer, "Draw your fires. Blow off steam." Then shouted, "All hands to the boats."

There was no delay in launching life

boat No. 3, nor in the Captain and his chosen friends piling on board and before anyone could realize what was happening, it was being rowed rapidly away from the steamship towards land. Things had turned out differently from what the boys expected, for instead of sneaking off, the Captain had given every one a chance. No, not a full chance, either, only half a chance, for life boats and rafts together would accommodate barely one out of every two of the living freight crowded on board the Admiral Noyes. With one accord the boys headed for the dory. They found the upper deck covered with a fright-crazed, struggling crowd of men, waiters and stewards on one side, cannery hands on the other, all fighting for the little boat.

"No chance!" Mason exclaimed; nor was there, for the strongest held possession, launched the dory and piled aboard until her gunwale was barely above water, then slowly paddled towards the ice floe. For every boat and both the life rafts, the struggle was just as sharp. One overloaded boat filled a dozen yards away but, buoyed up by metal air chambers, carried its clinging passengers to the ice with no worse damage than a wetting. A few of those left on the ship tore off the stateroom doors, others used the foresail boom, all found something to help the life preservers and reached the floe in safety.

"No, no, hold on, don't be foolish," John called to his companion who was about to follow the example of the others and plunge into the sea. "Don't jump!" he shouted loudly. "I have marked the height of the water. It isn't gaining so awful fast and I am sure the ship will float for six or seven hours yet."

"Yes, but can't you see we are drifting out from the ice? That's what scared those other fellows so," cried Ames.

"Well, I'm going to stay on board until I have to leave," returned Mason decidedly. "Don't you know the Admiral Dix isn't a full day behind us and maybe she'll come along and pick us up."

"You're right," agreed George. "I never thought of that," then after a moment of silence, "come, let's hunt for the leak. I heard one of the mates say it wasn't a loose plate at all, but one of those crazy cannery hands had opened a sea cock which jammed and wouldn't close and that was the cause of the trouble."

The boys found the mate was right. There was an open cock which Ames declared led into the forward hold. "All ocean going boats have sea cocks," he said, "so in case of fire they can flood the hold without opening the hatches and letting the air in. Come on, let's hunt for the wrench that works this one."

It was soon found, fitted nicely and worked without trouble. "There!" George exclaimed, when after they had turned and turned, it stopped with a solid jar. "Whatever kept that valve open has

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A SAINT'S WIFE

BY MARTHA BANNING THOMAS

*The bags are packed and ready, Nicholas!
Your gloves I laid together in the hall,
The thickest pair: it's cold tonight. Pull down*

*Your cap over your forehead! What a boy
You are to caper so! Stand still, you child
Of children, till I see your collar. There!
I knew you'd put that old coat on; it's torn*

From last year's journey, and you hid it where

*I could not find it, purposely! Of course
The red is beautiful, and they expect
To see you in it, but I tried to make
The new one just as bright. There's no time now
To change.*

*And, Nicholas, be very sure
To handle Vixen carefully; she's full
Of little tricks—you've stabled her too long!—*

And might lead on the others. Please don't let

Them take you near the trees; your sleigh's so small

And not well-balanced; branches catch their hoofs

Sometimes, and you forget.

*The bells were tuned
Just yesterday—one's missing from the reins*

Near Comet's head. You said he rubbed it off

*Against a chimney. How I like to think
Of all those chiming tongues that sprinkle sound*

*Like jets of frosted spray upon the night!
I know the children love them. Don't forget*

*The last, wee letter that came in today!
It asked you for a sheep, and so you made
An extra woolly one that squeaked a "Ba-a-a!"*

I tucked it in your pack right near the top.

*They're waiting for you, Nicholas! I feel
Their eager, little hearts; they beat so fast it's like*

*A pulse that throbs around the world.
Good-by!*

I'll have a good, hot breakfast when you're back.

Your gloves? Good gracious! Nick, I told you where

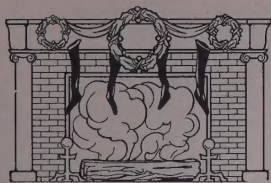
They were. I thought of course you had them on!

They're in the hall!

*The moon is up—look out
That Vixen doesn't shy at it.*

Good-by!

The Youth's Companion.



A CHRISTMAS ANGEL

BY SAMUEL SCOVILLE, JR.

"THE nights are too long," complained Henny-Penny as he got up for the fifth time the night before Christmas, only to find that it was three a. m.

"How many days before next Christmas?" inquired the pessimistic Alice-Palace from her crib, feeling that the day was already far spent.

At last and at last the sun peeped up over the edge of Violet Hill. At the very first gleam the Band arose with a Whoop. Down from the third story trooped the Third and Trottie and Honey, while the twins, Henny-Penny and Alice-Palace, by a flank movement, joined them at the foot of the staircase. Waiting a moment to form ranks they all burst into the Captain's room with a shout of "Merry Christmas" that nearly brought the plaster down. Over the fireplace hung a tremendous gray plaid shawl which a Scotch lord had once given to the Captain's grandfather in the days when men wore shawls instead of overcoats. For two generations it had been hung over fireplaces to cover up Christmas stockings. Underneath, for each member of the Band, there was a big stocking and a little stocking, both of them very lumpy and knobby and crammed to bursting with different presents. Each member of the Band rushed back to bed with the little stocking, while the big stocking and the presents too large for any stocking were kept until after breakfast.

Immediately sounded loud squeals and other assorted noises from the little-ups while the grown-ups tried vainly to sleep again before the rising-bell. Then came a wonderful Christmas breakfast, and the story of the first Christmas, and the taking down of the rest of the stockings and the trying out of all the presents, and more squeals, and greetings from other grown-ups and little-ups who had flocked in to compare presents. So it was after ten when the Band finally started out for their annual Christmas bird-walk. Every holiday they had a bird-walk and kept a list of all the birds seen and heard, the which was noted down in the "Band Book," a big leather-covered volume in which the Captain inscribed and recorded the doings of the Band year by year.

It was a dark day and the white snow crunched under foot in the stinging cold. Straight for Fox Valley the Band headed, following the little winding fox-path which led through the marsh and down between two round, green hills and across the brook through the beechwoods, and ended at Blacksnake Den. As they

crunched along in the snow, overhead through the gray air passed a little flock of greenish birds with white wing-bars, which dipped up and down as they flew, while down through the air came a faint, sweet, canary-like note.

"Goldfinches!" shouted Trottie and the Third together.

"They don't look very goldy," objected Alice-Palace.

"You see," explained the Captain, "they're wearing their winter suits. Mr. Goldfinch has put away his best black cap and yellow coat with black sleeves because, of course, they would wear out if he wore them all the year around. He always keeps the two bars on his wings though," finished the Captain.

As they marched in single file, suddenly a little piece of bark on the side of a white-oak tree seemed to move, and before their very eyes began to circle the trunk and go up in a spiral path. Through their field-glasses they saw that it was a little brown and gray bird with a long curved beak, and the Captain told them that it was the brown-creeper, who always goes up a tree in tiny little hops in a spiral and has to fly down. Then the Captain told them how for a long while no one could ever find the nest of a brown-creeper, until at last it was found under strips of bark on dead trees.

Down in the marsh the path led past a swamp-maple. In the fork of a bare branch was a round nest all silver-gray and woven out of strips of the pods and floss of the milk-weed. Trottie climbed up and brought it down for the Band's collection of nests. When looked at closely it seemed to have two stories. The Captain poked his finger down through the bottom of the first, and there underneath was another nest with two eggs, one pale bluish-white and the other speckled all over with cinnamon-brown. Then the Captain told them the story of that nest. It was made by Mrs. Goldfinch. After she had laid her first egg along had come Mrs. Cowbird, who never builds a nest of her own but always puts her eggs into other birds' nests. There they hatch first and the little cowbird crowds out or starves to death all the other birds in the nest. When Mrs. Goldfinch found what had happened she told Mr. Goldfinch, and they had gone to work and built another nest right over the ugly, fatal egg.

At the edge of the swamp they heard a loud whistle, and suddenly blood-red against the white snow flashed out a crested, brilliant cardinal-grosbeak. The Captain had them all stand still, and then he gave the adventure-call of the Band—the loud whistled note of the cardinal. For a minute the bird seemed to listen, and then suddenly dived into the thicket and whistled back even louder and much clearer than the Captain could.

"Oh, the nice, dear cunningcome!" exclaimed Alice-Palace as they listened to the bird and the Captain calling each other. "I wisht I could take him home."

"He is happier out in the woods," said the Captain, "than he could be in a cage."

All through the beech-woods were little flocks of slate-colored snow-birds and bluejays. Just before they came to Blacksnake Den they heard a curious grunting note, and a gray bird with white cheeks and a white breast ran up and down a tree ahead of them grunting to itself, "Yank, yank, yank." Suddenly as they watched him he stopped and broke into a loud "Quee, quee, quee, quee," all in one tone. The Captain told them that this was the spring-song of the white-breasted nuthatch, and that he had never heard one sing so early in the winter.

"I guess," said Trottie, "that it's a Christmas Carol for us."

On their way back through Fern Valley they had a glimpse of a bird with a long beak, black cravat, gold-lined wings, and a white patch over the tail. It was Mr. Flicker, who had decided to winter north instead of south for a change.

The last bird of all came late that night. The Band had been tucked away, tired out after a happy and exciting day. The Captain was dozing in front of the fire over a Christmas book. Suddenly from Henny-Penny's room came an S. O. S.

"Fathy!" he shouted, "come quick, there's an nangel in my room. I can hear him flappin' around. Hurry!"

The Captain hurried, for angels rarely appeared on any of his bird-lists. By the time he reached the room and turned on the light Henny-Penny had burrowed for safety so deep under the bedclothes that it was a wonder he ever came to the surface again. At first the Captain could see nothing, and told Mother, who had come in, that he was afraid that the angel must have escaped out of the open window. Just then he turned around, and there it was perched on the picture-moulding. It was a little reddish-brown screech-owl with round yellow eyes and tufted ears and a funny hooked beak. The Captain tried to steal up behind him, but without moving his position the little head with yellow eyes turned around and around and followed the Captain as if set on a double joint. As the Captain came close, suddenly there sounded a sharp, rattling, clicking noise.

"Oo," bellowed Henny-Penny from beneath the bedclothes, "is the nangel breakin' your bones, Fathy?"

However, it was nothing but the little owl snapping his beak, the favorite owl trick to drive away visitors. With a quick jump the Captain caught him. At first Mr. Screech-Owl puffed up and clicked his beak and pretended to be very fierce, but when the Captain stroked his fluffy back he snuggled down into his hand and seemed to like it. The Captain woke up all the Band and showed them the last bird of the day, and then with some difficulty persuaded the little owl to fly out of the window into the cold night.

Henny-Penny was much relieved to find out his mistake.

"Cuddly little owls are better'n's big old nangels," he said.

THE BEST THING

(Continued from p. 52)

washed out and I'll bet anything we have stopped the leak; now if the weather will only keep good we'll be all right."

"Why do you suppose the Captain didn't try to shut off the water?" asked John.

"Because he was afraid he would succeed," his wiser companion answered. "He was after the big insurance there is on this old tub. That's why."

The boys had been so busily occupied they failed to notice a heavy fog spreading over the ocean until they heard the siren of a steamer between them and the ice; then, on looking, they found nothing could be seen that was over fifty feet away. The light, off-shore wind brought faint sound of shots and shouts followed by noise of escaping steam, which showed the strange boat had stopped and was rescuing the men from the ice floe.

"Tough luck," lamented John. "They think the Admiral Noyes has sunk and won't look for her. There is no way to attract their attention. Here is a gun but no ammunition; a steam whistle, but no steam. Our voices won't carry half way to them against the wind. What can we do?"

"The bell! ring the ship's bell!" cried George and if they do not hear that, all we can do is, as my old mother used to advise, 'Trust to Providence.' I told her then not to preach so much, but I've changed my mind a whole lot since."

If the rescuers heard the bell they paid no attention, thinking perhaps it was a fog signal from some sailing craft out of whose path safety demanded they should keep, and the boys heard the thump of the steamship's wheel and the sound of her whistle as, after several hours' delay she kept on her way, leaving them alone on the sinking ship.

* * * * *

Spring turned to summer, summer faded into fall, then cold weather came. Mrs. Mason had aged rapidly and grown very thin. Early in July her brother sent word of the loss of the Admiral Noyes and told her that of the two passengers who went down with the steamship, one was her son. Then the company in whose stock her little money was invested failed, her income vanished and sharp want was felt by herself and her two boys. It was impossible for them to find steady work—a few odd jobs here and there was all.

"If brother Jack was only here," Edward said over and over again, day after day. "If brother Jack was only here he would do something."

"Hush, my son. It is not right to repine," his mother would always reply, yet in the secrecy of her chamber, grief was eating her life away.

It was the day before Christmas. "I'll bet if brother Jack was here we'd have a turkey tomorrow—yes and a mince pie, too," Will declared as he took his hat and

started away to try and earn a dime shovelling snow from someone's sidewalk.

The widow shook her head, wiped a tear from her eye and sat down to her darning and mending. She worked and thought, then her hands dropped into her lap and as she was trying to recall every incident of the happy Christmas of a year ago, she was aroused from her reverie by the stamping of horses and the sound of heavy footsteps as some one came to the door. She dropped her work which scattered all over the floor and ran to see who it was, for often had she pictured her boy returning in just such a manner.

It was not John but a cherry, good-natured messenger from the Express Company who set down in the hall a fair-sized box.

"For me?" she asked doubtfully.

"Yes, M-a-a-m," the man answered. "It says on it, 'for the Widow Mason' and it comes from Boston."

She hurried for a hatchet and with trembling hands raised the cover. First she saw a great fat turkey, then a jar of mincemeat, a box of cranberries, a bag of oranges, another of nuts. Inside the larger box was one of cardboard containing warm gloves and underclothing for the boys, a dress for herself and a dozen other things she was too excited to more than look at. Pinned to the dress was a twenty-dollar bill.

When the boys came home that afternoon it was an excited happy family—happier than they had been at any time since that dreadful telegram came saying, "John was lost on the Admiral Noyes." They looked at the things and wondered and guessed. There was no mark, no writing, nothing to show by whom the box was sent. When Edward tried on his gloves he found a gold piece hidden in each thumb, nor was brother Will overlooked, for the smaller pair of gloves each contained the same amount of money.

The turkey was ready Christmas afternoon at five. "The same hour at which we had dinner a year ago," the mother told her boys.

As they sat around the table, heavy at heart amidst the abundance, and thinking of the missing loved one present a year ago, and now buried in the white-capped waters of the deep Pacific, there came a sound of ringing sleighbells and of a cutter stopping at the gate. "Gee," exclaimed Will, as he followed his mother to the door. "I hope no mistake has been made and some fellow come for his things. I believe I'd fight before I'd let him take that turkey." He found his mother with her arms around a big, sun-browned fellow whom he had difficulty in recognizing as brother John. As she hugged him she was softly crying and saying again and again, "My son, oh my son. I am so thankful."

"Yes, I was detained in Boston and sent the box because I wasn't sure if I could be home Christmas," he explained in answer to brother Ed's questioning. "How

did I escape? Why didn't I telegraph? Well, we stopped the leak and after a lot of tinkering, got the donkey engine agoing and pumped the old wreck dry. Then we drifted out of the usual run of ships. Drifted and drifted, first struck a current that took us south, then a wind blew us back north. Fortunately there was no bad storm. At last we were picked up and towed to a little port in the North of Japan. Never could remember its name. Tried to telegraph. The Japs were suspicious. Took our money and message. Gave it back two weeks later to the insurance man; claimed they couldn't read English and didn't know the value of American money. One day the insurance people came on a tug. Wanted us to give them possession of the ship. My chum who had been reading a book, 'The Laws of the Sea,' said, 'No, settle the question of salvage first.' He was a wise one that boy Ames. I never would have thought of salvage or anything else except getting home. After a lot of haggling they agreed to give us a little over \$40,000 and expenses back. On inspection they found two big holes had been bored in the ship's bottom. Only went through the false bottom though. The inspector said, 'Don't telegraph. There's been fraud attempted. Ship and cargo insured for \$200,000; not worth half that. If the Captain, mate and engineer hear she has been saved, they'll skip out. If they don't we'll nab them.' They did too. I told him we'd already telegraphed. He laughed and gave us the message and the money back. When I got as far as Seattle I made up my mind I would come the rest of the way and surprise you. That's why. The papers yesterday had an account of the arrest of the men, and I was afraid you would see it. My money is in a Boston bank and we are all rich. The best thing about it is I have promise of a good job at a fat salary for the next year."

"No, my son," his mother said. "That is not the best. The best thing is that you have stood the test and proved yourself a man."



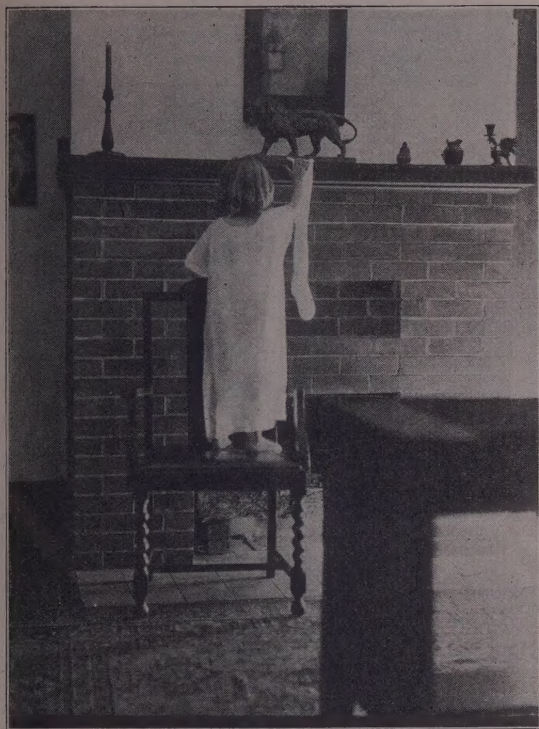
LET'S

BY MARJORIE DILLON

When merry Christmas comes this year,
Let's share its happiness and cheer;
A helping of good-will and joy
Let's give each needy girl and boy,
And never think of pausing—

Till we have passed some good along—
Our bounty, seasoned with a song,
A kindly word, a happy smile;
'Twill make this Christmas time worth
while.

If we go Santa Clausing!



THE "NIGHT BEFORE"

Made with a Graflex

WHERE CHRISTMAS GETS MIXED WITH THE FOURTH OF JULY

A Christmas Letter

BY EDNA S. KNAPP

Palmada, Florida,
December 26, 1922.

TO the Whole Blessed Bunch—Greeting! Christmas began here promptly at six-thirty o'clock. We have three clocks in the bungalow; Aunt Kate's jingly one, my cheerful cuckoo and the solemn Grandfather's, and they all strike in turn.

Then the town watchman fired his gun, boys rang the church bells and roused up every rooster in town. Generally the roosters crow all night, but evidently some had slept. In pauses of other sounds a sleepy mocking bird sang. Next, fire-crackers began to go off here and there and boys rang the doorbells, or knocked loudly. This seems a Southern privilege. Thus was Christmas born in this land of eternal summer.

Sunshine flooded my room and Aunt Kate was humming "Hark the Herald Angels sing," when I woke again. I dressed in a hurry with the wind bringing the scent of roses in at my window and tidy birds flying past to the bird-bath in front.

There was the dearest wee tree on Aunt Kate's sewing-table. It had sprung up over night, a wee cedar all tinsel and packages. We had to have breakfast first, then Grandpa was Santa and gave us our things. I had loads, and everything was lovely. The most interesting things were my chains of what they string down here, lovely iridescent shells,

for instance, and queer seeds.

Then I began to think all at once how far I was from New England and home and you bunch of girls and my throat choked something awful. No: it wasn't the trouble that made Doctor Brand send me down here. Truly I am getting better "every day in every way."

Some of the neighbors ran over to exchange greetings and then Miss Merrivale hurried in from the hotel. There was a little lame girl there who couldn't get any better and not one of her presents had come and the stores were all closed. Miss Merrivale came to us because we were the nearest and I tell you we scrambled to get something. I gave my prettiest box of candy: it was the one you sent, Marian; but you don't care do you? Grandpa picked his choicest roses; Aunt Kate sent a cheerful book and Uncle a twig with some funny peanut owls on it. We made the package look as Christmas-y as we could and Miss

Merrivale rushed back with it and little Esther was so pleased. That cured my bad feelings.

There's only one mail a day here and it comes holidays the same as ever. We don't really keep house. Aunt Kate has a temperamental oil-stove. So we—and

LOVE'S CHRISTMAS TREE

ROSE SEELYE-MILLER

I
am a
little
Christmas Tree.
My boughs are
full of mystery. You
cannot see the gifts
I bear, but truly they are wondrous fair. There are no toys for girls or boys, but better far are really truly gifts that are invisible to naked eye, the gifts of Love and harmony, and all the other gifts of Good we do not see, yet know we should. If you will open wide your heart, you may receive this better part. What are the things you cannot see? They're Love and goodness, harmony, and many more most precious things, that give our lives and spirits wings. So let them grow and bear below the fruits of all good things we know. Obedience, and from this root all other goodnesses shall shoot, until we fill the whole wide world, as Love's great banner is unfurled in this our Wide, Wide Christmas Tree, spread out for all humanity. And now I'll wish for every one the widest Christmas under sun.

Christian Register.

the rest of the town—went to the hotel for dinner. We had to take turns getting into the dining-room but we visited on the porch or ran over to the office to see if the mail was sorted. It took two hours to sort it today.

Such a dinner, with oysters from the Gulf, cranberry jelly in orange-baskets, kumquats, turkey, goose, fruit, etc.

My, but the sun was hot when we came out! It was good to get into the shade as we walked home. Summer clothes and flowers and fire-crackers on Christmas! Just imagine! Well, we got our mail and went home and had another Christmas. Snap, bang, was the accompaniment all over town.

Then it seemed only a minute until the children began to go by to the school-house. That is just beyond us and Aunt Kate had been training the youngsters for weeks on old carols that don't sound just the same under orange trees. I need snow and ice to make them sound natural. When we started I carried the boxes of tapers for the children and Aunt Kate had the candles for the choir.

The different church choirs assembled and formed in line. First came Aunt Kate and Miss Bronson, who had trained the High School pupils. Please imagine palms and orange trees and liveoaks draped with Spanish moss, the bluest of skies with fleecy cloudlets afloat, dusk just approaching, and long lines of people and children winding along the white roadway, each with a candle. I gave the candles to the children and lighted theirs. We did not begin singing until we got near the Park, then we all burst out with "Hark the Herald Angels." Singing, we entered the Park, circled around the tree and sang two carols there. Then the minister spoke briefly and we had an echo song and then we waited and sang another carol. Somebody rushed from Mr. Gates' house next door before the echo song and Santa came out of the clubhouse, panting. He had forgotten where his suit was and had to find someone who knew and get into it at the last instant. There were bags of candy and peanuts and an orange apiece for all the children and all the old folks. Some were sent to sick folks at home, too. Mabel Dixon insisted on one for her new brother who was six weeks old.

Then Mr. Peabody tried to take a flash-light picture of the tree. While he was getting ready, Mrs. Maxwell told me what a narrow escape the tree had had. The cows and pigs run loose here and folks have to fence their yards. Mr. and Mrs. Maxwell got the tree all ready just before six and went home. When they got back the tree lay flat and a hungry cow was just beginning to feast on the decorations. They drove off the cow and fixed up the tree. We did some visiting in the Park, after the best community tree ever, and went home.

Yours perpetually,

Glenna Munson.



THE BEACON CLUB

OUR PURPOSE: Helpfulness.

OUR MOTTO: Let your light shine.

OUR BADGE: The Beacon Club Button.

1700 LA LOMA,
BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA.

Dear Miss Buck:—I like to read *The Beacon* and would like to again wear the Beacon Club button. I go to the First Unitarian Church of Berkeley. I am ten years old and am in the sixth grade in the public school. In Berkeley's disaster my school and home were burned. I lived, before, at 1639 La Loma. I wish you would send me another Beacon Club pin, as in the fire I lost the one I had.

Your loving friend,
GWENDOLEN S. MORGAN.

1 CROSBY STREET PLACE,
AUGUSTA, MAINE.

Dear Miss Buck:—I would like to become a member of the Beacon Club and wear its button. I go to All Souls' Church and School in Augusta. Our minister is Rev. Dan Huntington Fenn. I go to the Junior Alliance and I enjoy that very much. We are learning some Christmas carols now in the Alliance.

I would like to correspond with some girl of my age or a little older. I am twelve years old and am in the seventh grade of the Smith School. I hope some girl will write to me. I would like to correspond with some girl outside of the "state of Maine."

Yours truly,
VIRGINIA WILCOX.

16 HILLIARD STREET,
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

Dear Miss Buck:—I used to be a member of the Beacon Club but I lost my pin and I am sending two cents in stamps to get another.

I am a member of The Children's Church of King's Chapel and my father, Rev. H. E. B. Speight, is the minister of King's Chapel and also the Superintendent of the Sunday School. I read *The Beacon* every Sunday and enjoy it ever so much.

Yours very lovingly,
RAY SPEIGHT.

A STORY OF CHRISTMAS GIVING

BY THE EDITOR

THERE is a mission station in Rhodesia, Africa, where the missionaries in charge wanted to teach the people at Christmas time the value of giving something to those less fortunate than themselves. They started in 1921 an offering which they named "white gifts for the king." The use to which gifts of this sort might be put was explained in the church service and in the Sunday School. When the day for the gifts came, the classes marched in order past the place where the offering was taken, each giving a recitation of a Bible verse or some line of poetry. The whole service was made as picturesque and attractive as possible and the teachers thought that much of the result they secured was due to these special efforts.

During the year that followed, the famine was sore in the land. A government relief station was established at which the missionaries sold seed corn, from six cents' worth to ten dollars' worth at a time, to all who could afford to buy, who had a patch of ground and a supply of water. In this way, thousands were saved from starvation, but even then the people were very poor and men and women and children were often hungry.

As Christmas, 1922, drew near, the teachers discussed the question of asking again for "white gifts for the king" and decided that this year they could not urge such giving. They felt, however, that an opportunity to give should be offered so that the privilege might be granted to those who would take advantage of it. So that year there was no urging, no marching of classes or groups; just the telling of what had been done with the money given the year before, and the announcement that the "white

gift" offering would be taken on the following Sunday.

The boys and girls who came to their Sunday School the next week brought their "white gift" wrapped up in a bit of paper. There were in the offering one hundred and fifty-four of these little packages. To the surprise of all connected with the mission, the offering in that year of famine was found to be a little larger than that of the year before when so much effort to secure the spirit of giving had been made. Boys and girls who wore rags and tatters, who had for the Sunday School only the humble garb which they wore during the week, had yet sacrificed in order that they might make a gift at Christmas time to someone less fortunate than themselves.

Does it seem sometimes as if people gave more out of poverty than out of abundance? I wonder if boys and girls in this favored land do as well in their Christmas offerings as do the dark-skinned people of that mission church in Africa.

NO ROOM IN THE INN

BY CLARENCE E. FLYNN

*The stars in the heavens were gleaming
On mountains, and meadows, and rills.
The song of the angels was streaming
While shepherds kept watch on the hills.
The wise men bent low by a manger,
Apart from Earth's striving and din,
To welcome the Heavenly Stranger,
For there was no room in the inn.*

*The years have not halted their sweeping,
It is Christmas again on the earth.
Again the glad season we're keeping,
Recounting the tale of His birth.
Let not our hearts be, as He sees us,
So crowded with pleasure and sin
They can offer no welcome to Jesus.
Lord, let there be room in the inn.*

The Girls' Circle.

RECREATION CORNER.

ENIGMA XXIII

I am composed of 18 letters, and am a well-known Christmas greeting.

My 1, 5, 16, 4, 11, is something round.

My 12, 6, 14, 10, 13, is written in lines that rhyme.

My 15, 2, 9, is a personal pronoun.

My 5, 18, 7, 8, 16, 17, is work given by a teacher.

My 16, 3, 11, is a kind of verse.

J. W.

ENIGMA XXIV

I am composed of 23 letters.

My 14, 10, 4, is a ship of which we are told in the Bible.

My 6, 9, 11, 3, 5, 8, is a place around which we like to gather.

My 19, 18, 7, 13, is much used in winter.

My 1, 2, 12, 18, is a room in a house.

My 2, 16, 14, 21, 22, is an adverb, meaning to repeat.

My 20, 21, 15, 23, is to make music with the voice.

My 18, 17, 19, 20, is not so much.

My whole is a favorite Christmas carol.

M. W. S.

TWISTED AUTHORS

1. Lcaamuy.
2. Pgiiknl.
3. Oillgnoeuf.
4. Rtychkaea.
5. Llceyar.
6. Khesrsaaecp.
7. Ynnnseto.
8. Oodswwhtrr.
9. Nnvseetos.
10. Worenhhhta.

ROBERT PERRY and
HASTINGS HATHAWAY.

CHARADE

My first is just a little word,
Its letters only two,
But it has a world of meaning
And this may give the clue—
Prefix one letter to it
And it will give the name
Of the most famous "Uncle"
Our country doth acclaim.
My third you all must surely shun,
My second too if wise,
For if you don't you may get stung;
So take this sage advice.
My whole full many men possess—
Some have it not, in truth,
Who have do great and mighty deeds
That move the world, forsooth.

Scattered Seeds.

ANSWERS TO PUZZLES IN NO. 10.

ENIGMA XIX.—Forefathers Day.

ENIGMA XX.—Preparations for Christmas.

TWISTED OCCUPATIONS.—1. Astronomer. 2. Carpenter. 3. Doctor. 4. Preacher. 5. Lawyer. 6. Farmer. 7. Teacher. 8. Electrician. 9. Chemist. 10. Weaver. 11. Optician. 12. Policeman. 13. Soldier. 14. Sailor. 15. Author.

HIDDEN CITIES AND COUNTRIES.—1. Peking. 2. Rome. 3. Norfolk. 4. Canada. 5. Albany. 6. Belmont.

ANAGRAM.—Merry Christmas to You.

THE BEACON

REV. FLORENCE BUCK, EDITOR.

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